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110320Z Jun 01

2001HOCHI00699 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-01	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	SRPP-00
	EB-00	EUR-00	UTED-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-00	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OPIC-01	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	SNIS-00
	NISC-00	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/008W

-----F6B390 110320Z /38

FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5151
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY
ASEAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
JICPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HO CHI MINH CITY 000699

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD/JMARTIN
STATE ALSO FOR DRL/IRF AND S/S-O
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CINCPAC FOR FPA
SECDEF FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM KIRF VM HUMANR RELFREE](#)
SUBJECT: BUDDHIST TENSIONS CONTINUE

REF: A. HCMC 0684 B.HANOI 1340 C. HCMC 0632 AND PREVIOUS

1. SBU) SUMMARY: REFTELS REPORTED THE HOUSE ARREST OF UBCV BUDDHIST THICH QUANG DO AFTER HE CALLED FOR UBCV BUDDHISTS TO TRAVEL UNAUTHORIZED TO QUANG NGAI PROVINCE ON JUNE 7 WITH THE PURPOSE OF RETURNING UBCV PATRIARCH THICH HUYN QUANG FROM CONFINEMENT IN QUANG NGAI TO HCMC. AS MANY AS 100 BUDDHIST MONKS FROM HUE ATTEMPTED TO GO TO QUANG NGAI ON JUNE 7. POLICE TURNED MOST OF THEM BACK BEFORE THEY COULD REACH THE BORDER OF THUA THIEN HUE PROVINCE. POLICE REPORTEDLY DETAINED APPROXIMATELY 20 MONKS AND NUNS FROM HUE AFTER REACHING QUANG NGAI. ANOTHER 25 MONKS AND NUNS FROM HUE WERE TURNED BACK AFTER REACHING THICH HUYN QUANG'S PAGODA AND ARE CURRENTLY PRESENT IN QUANG NGAI TOWN. ONE UBCV BUDDHIST MONK FROM HCMC WAS TURNED BACK AFTER ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THICH HUYN QUANG'S PAGODA ON JUNE 2. HE DESCRIBED THE SECURITY AROUND HUYN QUANG'S PAGODA AS EXTREMELY TIGHT. THE HCMC-BASED MONK AND OTHER UBCV MONKS IN HUE SAY THE SITUATION IN HUE AND QUANG NGAI REMAIN VERY TENSE. END SUMMARY.

BUDDHISTS FROM HUE ATTEMPT TO TRAVEL TO QUANG NGAI

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2. (SBU) ON JUNE 8, POLOFF MET WITH A UBCV MONK IN HCMC WHO HAD TRAVELED TO QUANG NGAI ON JUNE 2 AHEAD OF THE PLANNED JUNE 7 CONGREGATION. HE AND UBCV MONKS IN HUE WHOM POLOFF SPOKE TO BY TELEPHONE SAID THAT AT ABOUT 1:00 A.M. ON JUNE 7 POLICE IN HUE SUMMONED THICH TRAN CHI (WHO WAS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE PLANNED HUE DELEGATION TO QUANG NGAI). WHILE HE WAS STILL AT THE POLICE STATION, MONKS BEGAN ARRIVING AT HIS PAGODA, THE TU PHONG PAGODA, AT ABOUT 4:00 A.M. BY 6:00 A.M. TRAN CHI HAD NOT YET RETURNED, SO THE 60 OR SO MONKS, NUNS, AND LAYPERSONS WHO HAD GATHERED SET OFF WITHOUT HIM. THEY DEPARTED BY MOTORCYCLE BECAUSE PERSONS WHO HAD PROMISED TO SUPPLY CARS AND TAXIS REFUSED, EXPLAINING THAT POLICE HAD WARNED THEM THEIR VEHICLES WOULD BE CONFISCATED AND THEY WOULD BE SUBJECT TO ARREST. SECURITY FORCES WERE PRESENT ON THE STREETS IN HUE, AND 10 POLICE CARS AND SEVERAL POLICE ON MOTORCYCLES FOLLOWED THE GROUP. WHEN THE CONVOY REACHED THE LA NGA PASS IN THE MOUNTAINS ABOUT TWO HOURS OUTSIDE

OF HUE CITY, THEY MET A ROADBLOCK CONSISTING OF A LARGE POLICE VAN AND ABOUT THIRTY SECURITY FORCES. POLICE TOLD THEM THAT THOSE WHO HAD PROPER REGISTRATION FOR THEIR MOTORCYCLES AND A DRIVER'S LICENSE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO PROCEED. THOSE WHO DID NOT WOULD HAVE TO RETURN HOME OR BE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY FOR BREAKING THE LAW. VERY FEW OF THE MONKS HAD THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION. AFTER A LONG DISCUSSION, THEY DECIDED TO RETURN HOME. THE POLICE CARS AND MOTORCYCLES ESCORTED THEM ALL THE WAY BACK TO THEIR SEVERAL PAGODAS.

13. (SBU) ANOTHER GROUP OF ABOUT 20 UBCV BUDDHISTS DEPARTED HUE IN TWO VANS. THEY REACHED QUANG NGAI IN THE AFTERNOON
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OF JUNE 7, BUT STOPPED AT A POLICE ROADBLOCK ABOUT TWO KILOMETERS FROM THICH HUYEN QUANG'S PAGODA. POLICE REPORTEDLY DETAINED THIS GROUP AND THEY REMAINED IN DETENTION ON JUNE 8. (POST WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN THE NAMES OF ANY OF THE DETAINED BUDDHISTS OR ANY FURTHER DETAILS OF THEIR REPORTED DETENTION.)

14. (SBU) AT LEAST ANOTHER 25 OTHER UBCV MONKS, NUNS AND SUPPORTERS FROM HUE TRAVELED TO QUANG NGAI AND WERE TURNED AWAY AT THE ROADBLOCK TO THICH HUYEN QUANG'S PAGODA. THEY CURRENTLY REMAIN IN QUANG NGAI TOWN AND ARE IN CONTACT WITH SUPPORTERS IN HCMC AND HUE BY MOBILE PHONE. THEY REPORTED THAT A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD MALE BUDDHIST NOVICE WAS TAKEN INTO POLICE CUSTODY IN QUANG NGAI TOWN ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 7. POLICE FOUND HIM PASSING OUT LEAFLETS CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT FOR INTERFERING IN RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS. THE BOY IS A RESIDENT OF QUANG NGAI.

15. (SBU) UBCV BUDDHISTS IN HUE AND IN QUANG NGAI SAY THAT TENSIONS ARE VERY HIGH IN BOTH PLACES, AND THAT SECURITY PRESENCE IS HEAVY IN THE TOWNS AND AROUND ALL THE PAGODAS. THEY SAY POLICE ARE ASKING FOR IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS FROM ANY MONK OR NUN THEY SEE ON THE STREET. THE UBCV BUDDHISTS ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING WHAT THEY SHOULD DO NEXT AND REPORTEDLY HAVE NOT RULED OUT THE IDEA OF PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS.

AN HCMC-BASED MONK TURNED BACK IN QUANG NGAI

16. (SBU) POLOFF MET JUNE 8 WITH A UBCV MONK WHO DEPARTED HCMC AT 6:00 P.M. ON JUNE 1, DROVE THROUGH THE NIGHT, AND REACHED QUANG NGAI LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 2. THE MONK HAD VISITED THICH HUYEN QUANG ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS WITHOUT INCIDENT AND IS KNOWN BY THE LOCAL POLICE. THIS TIME HE AND HIS DRIVER WERE STOPPED AT A ROADBLOCK ABOUT ONE KILOMETER FROM HUYEN QUANG'S PAGODA. HE SAID THERE WERE ABOUT 40 POLICEMEN AND TEN SOLDIERS MANNING THE ROADBLOCK. HE COULD SEE ANOTHER 40 OR 50 SECURITY FORCES IN SMALL GROUPS FARTHER DOWN THE ROAD.

17. (SBU) HE CAME OUT OF HIS VEHICLE AND SAT WITH THE POLICEMAN IN CHARGE IN A TENT SET UP NEARBY. THE POLICEMAN READ A WRITTEN STATEMENT FROM THE PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE THAT STATED THE AREA WAS UNDER A PUBLIC HEALTH QUARANTINE BECAUSE OF AN OUTBREAK OF VIRAL DISEASE,
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AND NO ONE WAS ALLOWED TO ENTER. AFTER THIS FORMALITY, THE POLICE QUESTIONED HIM FOR TWO HOURS. THEY ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS RECENT VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO THAILAND. (HE HAD VISITED THE U.S., THAILAND AND CHINA EARLIER THIS YEAR.) THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHAT THE BUDDHISTS IN THESE COUNTRIES WERE SAYING ABOUT THE SITUATION REGARDING THICH HUYEN QUANG AND IF THEY WERE INVOLVED IN PLANNING PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM. THEY ALSO ASKED HIM ABOUT RECENT PROGRAMMING ON RADIO FREE ASIA. THEY TOLD HIM THAT THICH QUANG DO WAS CAUSING SOCIAL INSTABILITY, AND THAT THEY WERE SIMPLY DOING THEIR JOBS IN MAINTAINING SOCIAL ORDER. THEN THEY LET HIM GO. WHEN HE LEFT, IT WAS AFTER DARK. HE NOTICED THAT THE ELECTRICAL POWER IN THE AREA (THE ROAD TO THE PAGODA GOES THROUGH A SMALL VILLAGE) WAS CUT, BUT THE POLICE HAD A GENERATOR.

18. (SBU) HE RETURNED TO THE HOUSE IN QUANG NGAI TOWN WHERE HE HAD PLANNED TO SPEND THE NIGHT, BUT DECIDED INSTEAD TO RETURN IMMEDIATELY TO HCMC. THE NEXT DAY, HE HEARD THAT POLICE WERE LOOKING FOR HIM AT THE HOUSE AND AT SEVERAL PAGODAS IN THE AREA.

CONFLICTING REPORTS OF RESTRICTIONS IN HCMC

19. (SBU) THE HCMC-BASED UBCV MONK SAID THAT OVER A FIVE-DAY PERIOD BEGINNING JUNE 1, POLICE IN HCMC SEARCHED ALL OR NEARLY ALL THE PAGODAS IN HCMC. POLICE SUMMONED MANY PERSONS FOR QUESTIONING, AND FINED SOME OF THEM CERTAIN AMOUNTS OF MONEY FOR VARIOUS OFFENSES. AT HIS PAGODA,

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FIVE NUNS AND LAY PERSONS WERE QUESTIONED. HE KNEW
PERSONALLY OF PEOPLE AT SEVERAL OTHER PAGODAS IN THE CITY
WHO HAD SIMILAR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE POLICE.

110. (SBU) HE ALSO SAID THAT ON JUNE 1, THE HCMC DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC SECURITY, THE COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS,
AND THE OFFICIAL BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION HELD A MEETING AT
THE AN QUANG PAGODA IN HCMC. OFFICIAL BUDDHIST
REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THE CITY'S DISTRICTS ATTENDED
THE MEETING. THEY LATER PASSED WORD VERBALLY TO THE
CITY'S PAGODAS OF TWO DECISIONS MADE AT THE MEETING: 1)
THAT NO LAY PERSONS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO STAY OVERNIGHT AT
ANY PAGODAS IN THE CITY FOR THREE MONTHS, AND 2) THAT FOR
THREE MONTHS, ANY BUDDHIST MONK OR NUN GOING OUTSIDE A
PAGODA SHOULD TRAVEL BY CAR OR TAXI, AND WOULD NOT BE
ALLOWED TO TRAVEL BY MOTORCYCLE, BICYCLE, OR BY FOOT. THE
UBCV MONK SURMISED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THIS RATHER ODD
DECISION WAS TO DISCOURAGE BUDDHIST MONKS AND NUNS FROM
TRAVELING AND ALSO TO KEEP THEM FROM BEING SEEN IN PUBLIC,
DURING THIS SENSITIVE TIME.

111. (SBU) CONGEN CALLED THE OFFICIAL HCMC BUDDHIST
ASSOCIATION ON JUNE 8 TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE DECISIONS MADE
AT THE JUNE 1ST MEETING. THICH HIEN PHAP, THE SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE ASSOCIATION, SAID THERE HAD BEEN A MEETING,
BUT ONLY AMONG BUDDHISTS. HE SAID THE MEETING HAD BEEN TO
ENCOURAGE MONKS AND NUNS TO OBSERVE MORE CLOSELY THIS YEAR
THE TRADITIONAL BUDDHIST "PERIOD OF MEDITATION," WHICH
OCCURS IN THE SUMMER. FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS, THE
ASSOCIATION IS ENCOURAGING MONKS AND NUNS TO REMAIN IN
THEIR PAGODAS TO MEDITATE. HE SAID THAT IF A MONK OR NUN
FOUND IT NECESSARY TO GO OUTSIDE THEIR PAGODAS, THEY COULD
GO BY ANY MEANS OF TRANSPORT THEY CHOSE.

COMMENT

112. (SBU) POST WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND
REPORT ON SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AS THEY UNFOLD. POST
BELIEVES THAT THE WELL-COORDINATED PUBLIC SECURITY
RESPONSE TO THE PLANNED UBCV PROVOCATION (INTIMIDATING
INDIVIDUALS BY SEARCHING PAGODAS, QUESTIONING THEM AT
POLICE STATIONS, CUTTING PHONE LINES, ROADBLOCKS,
ENCOURAGING OBSERVANCE OF THE "PERIOD OF MEDITATION,"
PLACING THICH HUYEN QUANG'S PAGODA UNDER "QUARANTINE") AND
THE INTEREST POLICE SHOWED IN ASKING ABOUT OVERSEAS
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SUPPORT OF THE UBCV ALL UNDERSCORE THE INSECURITY OF THE
AUTHORITIES IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE UBCV BUDDHISTS.
EVENTS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S
RESPONSE PROVE THAT THE ORGANIZATION IT OUTLAWED 20 YEARS
AGO, REMAINS A RELIGIOUS (AS WELL AS A POLITICAL) FORCE TO
BE RECKONED WITH.

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